



NEWS

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Investment in public safety pays off in lives, money saved

Deaths from traffic collisions in California on track to an all-time low

Four years after the California Highway Patrol (CHP) received funding to bolster the ranks of CHP officers throughout the state; the increased staffing appears to have shown a positive impact on traffic safety and a reduction in the economic impact of traffic collisions and fatalities statewide.

“Saving lives is what traffic safety is all about,” said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. “The efforts of these officers and law enforcement throughout the state mean that more people are traveling home safely at the end of the day.”

In 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vowed to increase CHP patrol positions by 1,000 officers. The Governor’s promise marked the first time in 40 years that the CHP had been provided an increase in officer positions intended strictly for patrol responsibilities. To date, 540 new officers have been hired and are actively patrolling in commands throughout the state.

Although final statistics are not yet available, preliminary numbers show that in the three years since the increase in new officers, approximately 700 fewer people have died on the state’s highways and unincorporated areas - roadways primarily the responsibility of the CHP, according to CHP statistics. The economic savings as a result are estimated at more than \$3 billion, using statistics from the National Safety Council that approximates the average cost of fatal and nonfatal injuries from motor vehicle crashes. During the same time, preliminary statistics show there were over 19,000 fewer people injured resulting in a potential savings of nearly \$4 billion. The calculable costs of motor-vehicle crashes are wage and productivity losses, medical expenses, administrative expenses, motor vehicle damage, and employers’ uninsured costs.

As a result of the projected lower fatalities, the Mileage Death Rate – a standard measurement of traffic safety that translates into the number of persons killed per 100 million miles of travel - is anticipated to reach its lowest level in history for 2009.

While preliminary numbers show fatal collisions are down approximately 29 percent,

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enforcement and services to the public have increased, meaning a quicker response to collisions and roadway hazards and a higher level of assistance to motorists who call for help from the CHP. While statewide, officers issued 8 percent more citations, they also gave 74 percent more verbal warnings to motorists. Motorist services increased 13 percent, according to CHP statistics.

Additionally, for the first time in the Department's 80-year history, all 103 field offices are now staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"It's clear that the additional officer staffing has proved to be beneficial to all Californians and those who visit and use the state's roadways," Commissioner Joe Farrow said. "I applaud the dedication of all CHP officers to keep the roads safe for everyone."

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